

# ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIER MATERIAL FOR ORGANIC LIGHT EMITTING DEVICE AND METHOD OF MAKING

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/212,779, filed Dec. 16, 1998 entitled "Environmental Barrier Material for Organic Light Emitting Device and Method of Making," now U.S. Pat. No. 6,268,695.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to organic light emitting devices (OLEDs), and more particularly to OLEDs encapsulated in barrier stacks.

There is a need for versatile visual displays for electronic products of many different types. Light emitting diodes (LEDs) and liquid crystal displays (LCDs) have found many useful applications, but they are not adequate for all situations. OLEDs are a relatively new type of visual display which has shown great promise. An OLED basically includes an organic electroluminescent substance placed between two electrodes. When an electric potential is applied across the electrodes, the electroluminescent substance emits visible light. Typically, one of the electrodes is transparent, allowing the light to shine through. U.S. Pat. No. 5,629,389 (Roitman et al.), U.S. Pat. No. 5,747,182 (Friend et al.), U.S. Pat. No. 5,844,363 (Gu et al.), U.S. Pat. No. 5,872,355 (Hueschen), U.S. Pat. No. 5,902,688 (Antoniadis et al.), and U.S. Pat. No. 5,948,552 (Antoniadis et al.), which are incorporated herein by reference, disclose various OLED structures.

The use of OLEDs in flat panel displays and other information display formats is limited by the poor environmental stability of the devices. G.Gustafson, Y.Cao, G. M. Treacy, F. Klavetter, N. Colaneri, and A. J. Heeger, *Nature*, Vol. 35, Jun. 11, 1992, pages 477-479. Humidity and oxygen significantly reduce the useful life of most OLEDs. As a result, these devices are typically fabricated on glass substrates with glass covers laminated on top of the OLED and with the edges sealed to exclude water and oxygen from the active layers. U.S. Pat. No. 5,872,355 discloses the use of a polymer such as saran to seal the device. The water vapor permeation rates (WVTR) required to provide sufficient lifetime for OLEDs is calculated to be approximately  $10^{-6}$  g/m<sup>2</sup>/day. The best polymer films (such as saran) have WVTR values that are 5 orders of magnitude too high to be considered for OLED encapsulation. Furthermore, saran cannot be deposited using flash evaporation, condensation, and in situ polymerization within a vacuum chamber.

Thus, there is a need for an improved lightweight, barrier construction which can be used to encapsulate the OLED and prevent the deterioration caused by permeation of oxygen and water vapor and for a method of making such an encapsulated OLED.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These needs are met by the present invention which is an encapsulated organic light emitting device (OLED). The device includes a first barrier stack comprising at least one first barrier layer and at least one first polymer layer. There is an organic light emitting layer stack adjacent to the first barrier stack. A second barrier stack is adjacent to the organic light emitting layer stack. The second barrier stack has at least one second barrier layer and at least one second polymer layer. The device optionally includes at least one first intermediate barrier stack located between the substrate

and the first barrier stack, and/or at least one second intermediate barrier stack located between the organic light emitting layer stack and either the first or second barrier stacks. The first and second intermediate barrier stacks include at least one polymer layer and at least one barrier layer.

Preferably, either one or both of the first and second barrier layers of the first and second barrier stacks is substantially transparent. At least one of the first and second barrier layers preferably comprises a material selected from metal oxides, metal nitrides, metal carbides, metal oxynitrides, and combinations thereof. The metal oxides are preferably selected from silica, alumina, titania, indium oxide, tin oxide, indium tin oxide, and combinations thereof, the metal nitrides are preferably selected from aluminum nitride, silicon nitride, and combinations thereof, the metal carbide is preferably silicon carbide, and the metal oxynitride is preferably silicon oxynitride.

The encapsulated OLED can also include a substrate adjacent to the first barrier stack on a side opposite to the organic light emitting layer stack. The substrate can be either a flexible substrate or a rigid substrate. It is preferably a flexible substrate material, which can be polymers, metals, paper, fabric, and combinations thereof. The rigid substrate is preferably glass, metal, or silicon. If a rigid substrate is used, it can be removed prior to use if desired.

The polymer layers of the first and second barrier stacks and the polymer layers in the first and second intermediate barrier stacks are preferably acrylate-containing polymers (as used herein, the term acrylate-containing polymer includes acrylate-containing polymers, methacrylate-containing polymers, and combinations thereof). The polymer layers in the first and/or the second barrier stacks can be the same or different.

The organic light emitting layer stack preferably comprises a first electrode, an electroluminescent layer, and a second electrode. The electroluminescent layer preferably includes a hole transporting layer, and an electron transporting layer, as is known in the art and shown in the patents whose disclosures have been specifically incorporated herein.

The invention also involves a method of making the encapsulated organic light emitting device. The method includes forming a first barrier stack comprising at least one first barrier layer and at least one first polymer layer, forming an organic light emitting layer stack, forming a second barrier stack comprising at least one second barrier layer and at least one second polymer layer, and combining the first barrier stack, the organic light emitting layer stack, and the second barrier stack to form the encapsulated organic light emitting device. Intermediate barrier stacks can optionally be formed. The layers are preferably formed by vacuum deposition.

The organic light emitting layer stack can be combined with the first barrier stack and/or the second barrier stack by laminating them together. Alternatively, they can be combined simultaneously with forming by depositing one layer on the other.

In an alternative embodiment, the invention involves an encapsulated organic light emitting device having a substrate, an organic light emitting layer stack adjacent to the substrate, and a barrier stack comprising at least one barrier layer and at least one polymer layer, the barrier stack adjacent to the organic light emitting layer stack. The invention also involves methods of making the encapsulated organic light emitting device. One method includes provid-